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13 June 2014

Mrs J Wethereall
Headteacher
Newlands Primary School
Dumpton Lane
Ramsgate
CT11 7AJ

Dear Mrs Wetherell

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Newlands Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 12 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in June 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weakness designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Marcia Headon
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2013

- Improve the achievement of pupils and increase the proportion of teaching that is consistently good and outstanding by:
 - giving all pupils regular opportunities to correct and improve their work after it has been marked
 - making sure all teachers have consistently high expectations for pupils' behaviour and the work pupils produce
 - making sure teachers use assessment information to plan work that is matched to the needs and capabilities of the different groups of pupils
 - ensuring that lessons are delivered at a brisk pace, motivate pupils to do well and encourage them to have positive attitudes to learning
 - promoting pupils' independence and resilience so that pupils have high aspirations and are able to be active participants in their learning and can judge their own progress.

- Build on improvements to attendance to ensure all pupils attend as regularly as they can and are punctual to school.

- Strengthen further the capacity of leadership and management at all levels to sustain improvement by:
 - rapidly putting into place the plans that the new executive governors have for asking challenging questions and holding the school to account for improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement
 - implementing the planned procedures to manage the performance of staff so that all teachers are accountable for improving teaching and learning
 - creating an effective and sustainable long-term structure for leadership and management so that the school is led and managed in all subjects and key stages as well as at senior levels.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 12 June 2014

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, executive headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the attendance officer, and two members of the regional governing body. The inspector observed seven lessons, all jointly with a member of the leadership team. In lessons, the inspector talked to pupils and viewed their work. The inspector scrutinised documentation to show evidence of the work taken to improve achievement. The inspector also viewed the latest academy development plans, attendance figures and information about the progress pupils are making.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, an additional teacher has joined the academy in Year 1. The deputy headteacher is currently absent from the academy on a long-term basis. An executive headteacher has been appointed by the sponsor to add capacity to the senior leadership team. A new Chair of the local Governing Body took up his role in December 2013.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

The headteacher has continued to maintain the focus upon improving the quality of teaching and learning. In this, she has been well supported by the executive headteacher and specialist advisers, who are employed by the academy sponsor. The academy staff have been very receptive to new ideas and are keen to improve their practice.

The senior leadership team has closely checked the work of the academy. It has established an effective six-weekly cycle of lesson observation, review of pupils' progress information, and scrutiny of work. These improved quality assurance measures hold staff tightly to account. The revised management structure which now incorporates leaders of learning has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress. The judgements of the headteacher and senior team on the lessons observed during the visit and on the quality of the work completed over time agreed with those of the inspector.

The leadership team has placed a strong emphasis upon ensuring that learning is seen as the main priority and that this is reflected in the improved working atmosphere in the academy. Staff training to enhance the quality of teaching and learning has been a high priority. However, the leadership team is fully aware that there is still considerable work to be done to ensure consistency amongst the staff.

The academy's current information, which tracks pupils' attainment and progress, is detailed, and used to inform teaching. It indicates that attainment at both Key

Stages 1 and 2 has improved. In all year groups, pupils are making more rapid progress. The vast majority of pupils enter the academy in Reception with attainment that was at least a year below what might be expected for their age. Over two thirds of these children are now making more than reasonable progress. The academy's predictions indicate that a higher proportion of pupils in Year 1 than last year is likely to exceed the expected standard in the phonics check. At Key Stage 2, the academy's predictions indicate that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics overall will be slightly below national averages. However, from the academy's information on pupils' progress and work seen in books, the proportion of children on track to make reasonable progress in reading, writing and mathematics is on target to be slightly above national averages. Current information shows that the gap between the achievement of pupils eligible for additional government funding and their peers has narrowed. In this school, this funding supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after. These pupils are now making as much progress as their peers in the academy.

The regional governing body of the academy sponsor holds the academy to account tightly. It monitors pupil progress and attendance every six weeks. The local governing body is represented at regional level by the Chair of the Governing Body. However, the local governing body still lacks capacity. It has undertaken some training and has begun to increase its visits to classes. Nevertheless, it does not have a systematic plan to address its own development and has not drawn up an action plan to address the issues raised in the inspection about its performance. It is not holding the academy tightly enough to account or asking searching enough questions about issues such as the progress of pupils or the use of the pupil premium money.

Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- The introduction of a new system for managing and recording the information about pupils' performance means most teachers are more aware of the progress pupils are making. They are using this information more effectively to ensure work is more closely matched to the ability of the pupils. For example, in a Year 1 literacy lesson, pupils were given different writing tasks depending upon the fluency of their reading and writing. Some pupils were writing a letter to the gorilla at London Zoo, asking him to arrange for animals to visit them, others were writing simple sentences about London landmarks and others were labelling pictures of London attractions.
- The professional development of middle leaders has been well supported through useful training. They are now more involved in monitoring pupils' progress, sharing good practice in teaching and in identifying what needs to be improved. A whole-academy approach to improving pupils' presentation in books has resulted in work being much neater. Headings are now underlined, work is dated and higher expectations are set, with teachers requiring work to be rewritten if it is not presented properly. Pupils now show a greater sense of pride in their work.

- The recent revision to the marking policy has improved the quality of feedback given to pupils. Marking in the books seen is completed regularly and points for improvement are given to pupils.
- The academy's behaviour policy is now more consistently employed. The classrooms have a more purposeful learning atmosphere and rewards are used to reinforce and praise good work and behaviour. 'Chatter trackers' are now used in classrooms to regulate the noise level when pupils are working.
- The training which has been given on improving teachers' planning and on questioning means that work is now set which challenges pupils to achieve more. In a Year 5 literacy session, the teacher's questioning drew out what the features of good descriptive writing might be. She was not content with simple one-word answers but sought detailed analysis of the types of words which might be most effective. This resulted in pupils talking about the use of 'ambitious vocabulary' as an effective strategy.
- Classroom resources are well used by some teachers. Most have 'working walls' where methods of working are displayed. In both Year 5 and Year 6 sessions on literacy, pupils used guides to check their punctuation and spelling. Year 6 pupils were encouraged by the teacher to use a thesaurus to find interesting alternative words.
- Teachers usually check for understanding and adjust their teaching accordingly. In a Year 3 drama session, the teacher quickly picked up that two boys did not fully appreciate what was meant by stage directions. Training on lesson planning and the work on revising of subjects has meant that learning is now more engaging for pupils.

Weaknesses in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- Despite the general improvement in setting work at the correct level, some of the most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the work which is set. In a Reception class, a child could easily double the number given but he was allowed to continue working on similar sums. Some teachers do not allow pupils time to think issues through before they give them the answer or do not check that there is real understanding of the topic being covered.
- Although the academy has employed an attendance officer, attendance still remains stubbornly below the national average. Absence increased as a result of an outbreak of chicken pox which affected a large number of children but attendance overall is still too low. Strategies such as home visits, telephone calls, the introduction of a walking bus, pupil and parent rewards and the use of sanctions have had a positive impact, especially on punctuality. But more needs to be done to raise the awareness of parents of the effects of absence on pupil progress.
- The new marking policy allows pupils to respond to the comments which teachers make to help them improve their work, either by requiring work to be corrected or an additional question answered, but pupils are not always doing so on a regular basis. Some teachers do not allow time for corrections

to be made nor do they insist that the follow-up work is completed. As a result, pupils do not all move forward in their learning as fast as they might.

- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to assess their own work. Although at the beginning of each lesson teachers work with the class to determine what they called "success criteria", often these describe steps which the pupils need to take to complete the work rather than stating what the pupils should be learning. This means pupils do not have the chance to determine whether they have succeeded in learning what they should.

External support

The sponsor has continued to provide good support to the academy. Its specialist advisers have worked alongside staff at all key stages and it has provided tailored training for newly qualified teachers and other staff when necessary. It has been checking the academy's action plan regularly. It has now reached the position where it is withdrawing its intensive support as it considers the academy is becoming more self-sustaining.